



# Limelight

TEACHER LITERARY & CURRICULUM GUIDE 2008-2009

## **BOLEROS** FOR THE **DISENCHANTED**

BY JOSÉ RIVERA  
DIRECTED BY CHAY YEW

Wimberly Theatre, Calderwood Pavilion at the BCA  
October 10 - November 15, 2008

HUNTINGTON THEATRE COMPANY  
IN RESIDENCE AT BOSTON UNIVERSITY







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# ***Boleros for the Disenchanted*** **by José Rivera** **Directed by Chay Yew**

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## SYNOPSIS

# *Boleros for the Disenchanted*

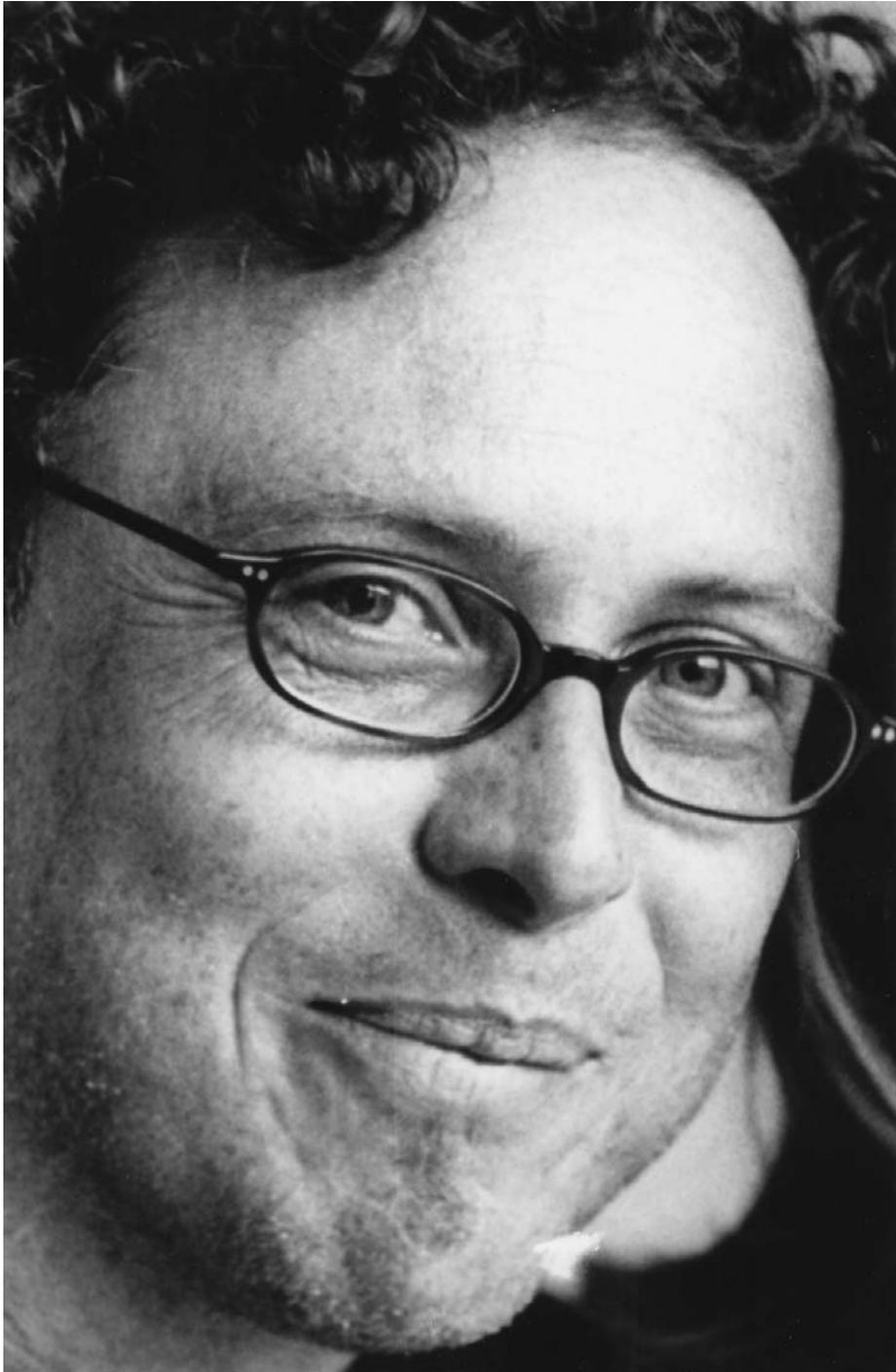
**B**oleros for the Disenchanted, a love story about beginnings and endings, opens in 1953 in Miraflores, a small country town in Puerto Rico. Marking one of playwright José Rivera's rare forays into realism, *Boleros for the Disenchanted* begins with Flora, age twenty-two, in the midst of a tumultuous love affair with Manuelo, her philandering fiancé. Her demands for respect and fidelity are ridiculed by her charming but duplicitous intended as the illusions of a naïve dreamer. Seeking solace from heartbreak, Flora travels to the city of Santurce to visit her irreverent cousin, Petra, where, unexpectedly, she meets Eusebio. This young and handsome member of the National Guard charms her with his persistence, and with their shared love of the deeply romantic bolero, "Dolores."

After Flora and Eusebio marry, he plans to take her to the United States to start their new life together. With this new love Flora suddenly finds herself caught between the ambiguous promises of the American Dream that beckons a new generation of Puerto Rican workers and her family and familiar roots at home. Her father, Don Fermin, appalled at the idea of Flora going to America asks in anger: "Up there? To that slum? To the drug addicts and prostitutes? And snow?"

In the second act, we find Flora and Eusebio, now in their sixties, in a small military town in Alabama. At the very least, they have survived the snow, but will they be able to ultimately survive each other? Through the counseling of a young engaged couple, Flora reveals the struggles she and Eusebio have faced, and the strength that forms the true foundation of love and marriage. After witnessing the birth of this couple's love, we now see them in the autumn of their lives. With disarming humor and penetrating sadness, Rivera navigates the ideas of enchantment and disenchantment through thirty-nine years of a marriage full of all the joy and grief a lifetime together brings. —KCW



# THE EPIC AND THE DOMESTIC: The Writing of José Rivera



José Rivera

José Rivera, born in San Juan, Puerto Rico, moved to the U.S. at a young age and began writing plays 30 years ago. Quietly intense, with a wry sense of humor that is at once youthfully impish, self-deprecating, discriminatingly world-weary, and melancholic, Rivera possesses an almost virtuosic sensitivity to his surroundings. He himself follows the advice he gives young writers, which he borrowed from Faulkner: “The greatest drama is the heart in conflict with itself.” It is thanks to this keen and heightened awareness of the oft-overlooked contradictions of daily life, its irony, brutality, and tenderness, that he has been able to raid reality so effectively for the theatrically worthy. His success on both stage and film only continues to grow: he has won two OBIE Awards for his work for the stage, and has been the recipient of a Fulbright Arts Fellowship and a Whiting Award, as well as grants from the National Endowment for the Arts and Rockefeller Foundation; his work has been translated into seven languages. For his work on *The Motorcycle Diaries*, he was the first Puerto Rican screenwriter to be nominated for an Oscar. Rivera engages with some of the biggest questions of humanity in his work: he wrestles with the existence (and temperament) of God, the laws and logic of the universe, the nature of love and sexuality, the stability of truth, the occasional fickleness of faith, the voids and bridges between youth and old-age, and between one country and another — but he does not purport to have the answers.

Rivera’s muscularly musical writing style can affect an audience like extreme weather — breathtakingly forceful in a way that is at once organic and completely extraordinary. Paraphrasing Bertolt Brecht’s definition of great writing, director Tina Landau has said that Rivera “makes the familiar strange and the strange familiar.” Since he began writing over thirty years ago, he has given us many scenes of strangeness: cosmic battles, houses that grow like people, time that stops behind closed doors, frustrated moons, and cats that speak. And yet the images that can haunt a viewer or reader of Rivera’s work most are often his more quotidian moments: a saltine cracker in the pocket of a pregnant woman’s rain-soaked dress in *Cloud Tectonics*, a girl dwarfed by



Rodrigo de la Serna and Gael García Bernal on *La Poderosa* (The Mighty One) in *The Motorcycle Diaries* (2004)

## Rivera's muscularly musical writing style can affect an audience like extreme weather — breathtakingly forceful in a way that is at once organic and completely extraordinary.

mountains of unsorted socks in *Each Day Dies with Sleep*, a small sculpture of welded nails in *Marisol*, a kiss on a scar in *References to Salvador Dalí Make Me Hot*, a broken bike sold for parts in his screenplay for *The Motorcycle Diaries*.

In Rivera's writing, the distinctions between epic and domestic blur; the surreal and the suburban become irrevocably tangled. His stories often seem to argue that the logic by which we live is not always emotionally honest — that it is often the invisible and the inexplicable that direct our lives more than the facts of the matter. Rivera's characters may find they can summon the strength to navigate a worldwide apoca-

lypse of warring angels more easily than the strength to navigate a marriage. Landau has written that in Rivera's plays, "God (or nature) has both a sense of humor and a temper." We see this in the Uzi-armed angel in *Marisol*, the mutability of time in *Cloud Tectonics*, the tantrum-throwing moon in *References to Salvador Dalí Make Me Hot*. Somehow, with this perspective, Rivera manages to be political without being didactic, sentimental without being precious, poetic without being indulgent.

At times, Rivera traffics in a sort of modern romantic irony: grasping at the incomprehensibility of the world at large — from cosmic collisions to kitchen sink family

tensions — his work can appear as repeated efforts to reach a "truth" which, though unreachable, still insists that we continue the search. Poet and playwright Heinrich von Kleist, a bastion of the German Romantic movement in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, wrote in his essay "On Marionette Theatre," that, since we have eaten from the tree of knowledge, Paradise is locked to us and we now must travel around the world to see if it is perhaps open again, somewhere at the back. Rivera's work often seems to engage in this quest for a hidden backdoor to enlightenment. Recognizing the impossibility of a "whole," or the "truth," Rivera collects fragments which reflect both the enormity and simplicity of human life. His opening quotations to his published works, and his plays themselves, often read as meditations on scale: reverence for the incredible impact of the seemingly pedestrian and inconsequential and, conversely, fearlessness of the seemingly elusive and immense. Rivera quotes Federico Garcia Lorca in one preface: "...because even the tiny banquet of a spider is enough to upset the entire equilibrium of the sky."

"Think of writing as a constant battle against the natural inertia of daily language," Rivera advises. And so, with this play, Rivera, whose voice always defiantly resists categorization (and always refuses inertia), once again takes us somewhere new. Quoting Canadian author Mavis Gallant, he writes in a preface to his own published works, "The mystery of what a couple is exactly, is almost the only true mystery left to us, and when we have come to the end of it there will be no more need for literature." It is this familiar mystery that José Rivera takes on with *Boleros for the Disenchanted*.

He addresses large questions of material versus spiritual wealth, fatalism versus opportunism, and nostalgia versus memory, navigating through the domestic (but by no means simplistic) world of the family. In the microcosmic evolution of one love affair — from its new, fragile, and flirtatious birth in Puerto Rico to its familiar and formidable, strength nearly forty-years later in small-town Alabama — Rivera dares in *Boleros for the Disenchanted* to take on the nature of love itself. — KCW

## INTERVIEW

# The Enchanted World of José Rivera

*Playwright José Rivera sat down with Kristina Corcoran Williams, dramaturg for the world premiere production of Boleros for the Disenchanted at Yale Repertory Theatre, to discuss the play, the relationship between Puerto Rico and the United States, and how he writes. Their conversation stretched throughout the rehearsal and production process.*

**“The impermanence of things has a beauty to it. And I don’t think that something can be radiant without its deep sadness.”**

**You were born in Puerto Rico but you’ve spent most of your life here in the United States. Can you talk a little bit about your childhood, growing up and how you came to playwriting?**

I was born in the city of Santurce, in Puerto Rico, and then lived for four years in a small town called Miraflores, a little country town. When my parents moved to New York all of my father’s family moved to the inner city — Patterson, Newark, the Bronx — but my dad moved to Long Island which, back then, was very green, a lot of farms and forests. It was great. In a way it wasn’t a big change from Miraflores...except the weather. I couldn’t have asked for a better childhood because it was all about wandering the woods and spending time alone, playing games with trees and squirrels and animals. I really think it fed my imagination as a kid. I think I got into writing really through the back door. My mother was a very good storyteller and my grandparents were also very good. I think I learned to write by listening to these very instinctively good storytellers tell their stories, craft them without any sense of craft. I learned to appreciate how entertaining simple words can be. The stories they told were often very fantastic —

involving ghosts and devils — so I grew up with an access to that side of reality that I think other writers maybe wouldn’t have. It’s one of the few things that I think was really positive about growing up very poor, because we didn’t have a TV for a long time so storytelling was our entertainment. To this day, despite all the years that have passed, I’ve never learned any more about writing than I learned then.

**Did you have any formal playwriting training?**

No. Not really. I had a wonderful high school drama teacher who told me I should read *The Glass Menagerie* and plays like that. And I loved them all, all those great plays. But no, I didn’t. I went to a little college in Ohio and I took a poetry writing class which I hated so much because the teacher would read his own poetry in class and it was horrible, so I never took another writing class again. I started to write plays in college. Each year I wrote a play that I produced and directed, and I would get the university facilities to do them and that was really all the education I had. Later, I took a workshop with Gabriel Garcia Márquez and that’s probably the only class I took. But that

wasn’t so much a class so much as just him talking. He said right off the bat, “I’m not a teacher so don’t expect me to teach you anything,” but what he did demonstrate to us were the realities of a writer’s life and his methods of working. To learn that from him was great. That was a big education right there. Also, having been an actor in college taught me a lot about writing. I learned a lot about structure from being in a Chekhov play, and I learned a lot about language by being in Shakespeare. I think being on the inside, working from the inside out, having to solve the problems of an actor is a great education for the construction of good plays.

**You write for films now as well as the stage. Are there stories you believe can only be told on stage? When you have an idea do you know right away that it’s going to be theatre or film?**

I wish I had a very inspiring answer to that but I have a very boring answer: I only write movies when I’m paid, and when I think of an idea that’s original and personal I write it for the stage. Almost everything I’ve done for film is something that’s come to me from the outside.

**What usually inspires your plays? Images? Personal encounters? Muses? Dreams?**

Almost everything comes from some personal experience of some kind. Either something I see, something that’s told to me, or something that’s been lived through. For instance: when I was in high school I got a job in a place called the Brookhaven National Laboratory, which is way out on Long Island. And Brookhaven then, had this thing called a gamma forest, a source of gamma radiation in the middle of the forest, part of a forty-year experiment. They would lower the gamma ray source into the ground in a lead box and then the scientists and I would go out and measure all of the moss and count the dead birds. It was like a post-nuclear landscape. It is what would happen in a nuclear war in a forest. Everything was dead. And I’ve never forgotten that. For years I’ve been thinking: “God, I would love to write a play about those experiences.” You know we were not given any protection against the radiation and here I was, 19 years old, so I trusted every-

body. And then my first daughter was born with bright red hair and I wondered — I wonder if there's a connection between them — the radiation and the red hair of my daughter! I've also been really musing on the themes of parenthood and having children. So, I'm thinking of writing a play about that. So everything comes from a little personal experience and then whatever theme is obsessing me at the time.

**What finally made you decide to write *Boleros for the Disenchanted*?**

The stories in *Boleros* I'd been hearing for a long time. My mom loves to talk about how she met my father and I'd always thought they'd make good theatre, but I didn't know if there was a play there. And then I really started to think about their last few years, before my father died, and recall how they lived in Alabama and what she had to do to take care of him. Then I felt that these were the vast bookends of a very long story, and that to connect the bookends would make a wonderful piece of theatre. It was really that collision, of the beginning and the end, that I thought had tension and felt dramatic to me — that's when I thought there was a play there.

**You don't usually write in the style of realism. What has it been like for you? Has it been easier than you thought? Harder?**

It's like pulling teeth! I found it very hard, and I take my hat off to anyone who does it well. I just think that you know when you enter an imaginative landscape — let's say you're Samuel Beckett and you're writing *Waiting for Godot* — no one has ever been in that landscape until you created it. No one has ever been Pozzo and no one has ever been Estragon and no one has ever waited for Godot quite like that. So in a way the audience is going to go — "Oh, here's an adventure, let's take it!" But when you write realism, everyone believes they know the rules of psychological realism, so everybody is a judge, judging from their own experience. I respect that, and I think that's what's hard about it. I've never really had to think that way, and I don't particularly think logically. My math never adds up, so I really had to force myself to work those muscles.



Gary Perez and Adriana Sevan in Yale Repertory's production of *Boleros for the Disenchanted*; photo by Joan Marcus

**There seems to be a constant tension between worldviews in *Boleros*: a spiritually rich fatalism coming from Puerto Rico versus the meritocracy, capitalism, and opportunism coming out of America. The play doesn't seem to come down in favor of either side.**

I grew up being inundated with this thought that North Americans are materialistic and opportunistic and capitalistic and that that was not right. Even if you had to be poor your whole life, it's better to be happy in whatever form that happiness takes, but Americans in the north are busy motivating their careers and gaining more. There was a strong movement — at least when I was growing up — that questioned that ethos, questioned whether that was really the right way to live. And I can't really say, from my own life, which is better because I've had a little of both. Another mental dichotomy of the play that relates to the spiritual is the split between believing that your life is destined, that it's written already and you're just living out your destiny, and the sense of free will — the ability to act and change the course of the events of your life. The play really looks at this marriage and asks the audience to imagine: is this all fate? Or is it the outcome of free will?

***Boleros* also seems to explore the relationship between memory and nostalgia — the point where one may tip unconsciously into another. Did you intend to consider their differences with this play?**

I wrote the two halves of the play very differently, so that Act I itself is a kind of nostalgia. How accurate that is and how real it is, is left up to some interpretation.

**Do you feel like it's human nature either to romanticize or demonize our past?**

I do think that's a human tendency. It's very hard to have a photographic representation of the past in your mind, because everything is laden with emotion of some kind. In this particular case with these characters, those emotions tend to dwell in the area of loss and regret. So there's a melancholic quality to it.

**One of your characters in *Boleros* asks: "Can anyone ever really be smart about their feelings?" This question seems linked to the human inability to be precise with our memories.**

Absolutely. And this is a play about falling in love and being committed to somebody; that's not a science. There's no formula to that; there are no steps. The characters in the play are pretty much intuitive and emotional. And when you see the play you realize that mistakes have been made, that certain things are not quite the way the dream was supposed to turn out.

**In *Boleros* there are major themes of enchantment and disenchantment with people and places, and even dreams. Are those themes you've been thinking about for a while or did you stumble upon them while writing this play?**

I've been thinking about them for a while. There's a pretty well known book about Puerto Rico called *The Enchanted Island*. It is an interesting title because, to me, "enchanted" has a double meaning: to be enchanted could be something you're excited about and love, but to be enchanted could also mean that you're hypnotized into a false state. That was a pretty interesting way of describing the

island. I know from my personal experience, from my parents' journey, and from other people in my family, how tough it's been for Puerto Ricans to come to the States. There is an almost quasi-colonial relationship between the States and Puerto Rico.

**You just went back to Puerto Rico for the first time in a long time.**

13 years.

**What was it like? Was it different than you imagined or remembered?**

It was really wonderful. It couldn't have been better, because I went back to see a production of *Marisol* that the students were doing at the university, and it was the first time the play had been done in Puerto Rico. It was a bilingual production, and that had never been done at the university. There were a lot of firsts. A lot of excitement. The students all knew I was coming and there was a lot of excitement about that. It was the first time I'd ever had an artistic experience in Puerto Rico. I'd always gone because my family is there, but I'd never gone as an artist in any way. And post-*Motorcycle Diaries*, there's been renewed interest in my work because no Puerto Rican had ever been nominated for an Academy Award in that category. So going there as an artist was really exciting, seeing how good *Marisol* was very exciting, and then the reception I felt from the students was very exciting. Then I spent some time with my family out in the countryside, and that was really nice. The countryside of Puerto Rico doesn't seem to have changed since 1953. It's still a very slow pace of life. Young people don't have cars, they ride horses wherever they need to go — they ride bareback. People raise the things that they eat. So in that way life hasn't changed. And it's nice. I'm glad it hasn't changed. It's nice to go back.

**Can you talk a little about the mechanics of your writing? Do you write on a schedule? In bursts of inspiration? Do you always write longhand?**

I try to have a schedule but it almost never happens. There are too many distractions and complications. Sometimes I consider myself a guerrilla writer. I will write in the spur of the moment when the time is right

then and there. I do write longhand — I'm always ready to write and I always have my notebooks with me, so when I find myself with a spare half an hour I can write. But it's very, very hard. In a way, the work I've done in the movie industry has made it even harder to write plays just because the movie-world is so time consuming. There are endless meetings, and when I'm writing a movie about something I don't know much about there is endless research, so my windows get smaller and smaller to write plays. I have to take advantage of them whenever I have them.

**You've written a sort of teaching manifesto: "36 Assumptions About Writing Plays." One of them says: "the more multiple your personalities, the further, wider, and deeper you might be able to go."**

It's amazing how fine you can split your personality and how much differentiation you can create in your selves. I try to at least imagine many multiple points of view and to look at things from every possible facet. Something I say when I teach writing is that one quality of really great writers is empathy. And that quote is really about the writers' ability to empathize with a great number of people. To be able to pretend that you are them and then picture their point of view accordingly: how does life hit me when I'm that person? I think that's an important skill for any playwright.

**Your work is often described using the language of visual arts or music rather than the language of literature. Does that feel like it's a fair assessment?**

I think it's really hard to talk about writing actually. When someone asks me what I like about a particular work it's hard to articulate, and I think it's really nice to ground the experience with analogies to other forms.

**I know that the term "magical realism" can be a confining term. Others have called your work "mad realism" —**

I like that one.

**And then Tina Landau has talked about the "more-so" quality of your plays.**

The bottom line for me is 'does the work honor the theatre, or does it appropriate the language of film and television?' As long

as no one compares me to a made-for-TV-movie I'll be happy. All these terms talk about the theatricality of theatre, which I love.

**Your plays, despite their love, humor, and hope, always have this doppelgänger of darkness, bleakness, and mortality. A specter of sadness hangs over a lot of your work. In the theatre, where you're dealing with emotional extremes, do you think the sadness and the joy will always come in tandem?**

I don't know if it's growing up Catholic or growing up in the 20th century, but I never feel far from death. Maybe it's growing up with a nuclear threat of the 1950s and '60s, but I just feel a consciousness of death all the time, and with that comes a feeling of how temporary things are. How fleeting. I have a play *Each Day Dies With Sleep*, where the shortest scene is the happiest scene — it really is about how brief happiness is. Maybe I should see a doctor, but I think that melancholy is sweet. I think that a sense of the impermanence of things has a beauty to it. And I don't think that something can be radiant without its deep sadness. It's like not being able to know good without bad. I like those mixtures.

**So what's next?**

Let's see. Immediately next I have to do a new draft of the *On the Road* screenplay I've been working on for quite some time. I have to re-write the script and cut out seven or eight million dollars worth of production values which means cutting characters and cutting locations without sacrificing the narrative — so it's going to be tricky work, but that's what's next!

**Have you ever had your work produced in Boston before?**

Not that I know of, no.

**So this will be a first?**

It'll be a first. I've never spent much time in Boston. I once took the subway in Boston which I thought was really fun.

**Slow!**

Yeah, slow. But cute. Cute little cars.

## The Bolero – Flight Through Song

The bolero is a musical style with roots in the Caribbean where cultural fusions from Spain, Africa, and India began. The Latin American boleros, danceable love songs, peaked in popularity in Puerto Rico between 1930 and 1960 with the increased accessibility to radio. One of the possible etymologies of “boleros” considered by Spanish musicologist Javier Suárez-Parares is derived from the word “volar” meaning “to fly.” The songs could be considered to have provided a kind of emotional flight: at once an assessment of and an escape from the industrial and political upheaval of the times. The songs capture both the sadness and the beauty of change, almost always in the terms of love. This deeply romantic song and dance form, made for a couple, is itself based on musical pairings. Musically and lyrically the form is deeply sentimental. Influenced not only by the Spanish but also by Afro-Cuban musical styles, it is binary in both structure and sentiment. Much like Rivera’s *Boleros for the Disenchanted*, which deals with the binary relationships between not only lovers, but also nations, the bolero as a musical form works, in some ways, as a microcosm of the issues of José Rivera’s drama.

Danceable and slow-paced, the form is thought by many to have originated with the bolero “Tristezas” (“Sadnesses”), which was composed in Cuba in 1865. As the bolero became increasingly widespread, one of the most popular, emblematic boleros “Ese Bolero Es Mío” (“This Bolero is Mine”) reflected the universality of the melancholic love songs that the form invariably sought to capture.

One verse of “Ese Bolero Es Mío” reads:

*Ese Bolero es mío  
porque su letre soy yo  
es tragedia que yo vivo  
y que solo sabe Dios.*

*That Bolero is mine  
because its words are my own  
its tragedies are mine  
as God alone knows.*

Rivera often speaks of how, contrary to instinctive logic, the more specific one’s writing is, the more it will resonate universally. In this way his play, like a bolero, tells the story of one specific love, that, in so many ways, is the story of all loves.

In *Boleros for the Disenchanted* the central bolero is “Dolores.” Its lyrics, again a marriage of love and melancholy, appear in full below:

*Dolores  
En tu nombre, Dolores,  
se haya escrito un destino,  
el destino de un hombre  
que nació para ti,  
por ti vivir,  
morir por ti.*

*Dolores  
In your name, Dolores,  
there’s a destiny written,  
the destiny of a man  
who was born for you  
and who wished to exist  
only for you,  
live for you,  
and for you, die.*

*Dolores translated by Jorge J. Rodríguez*

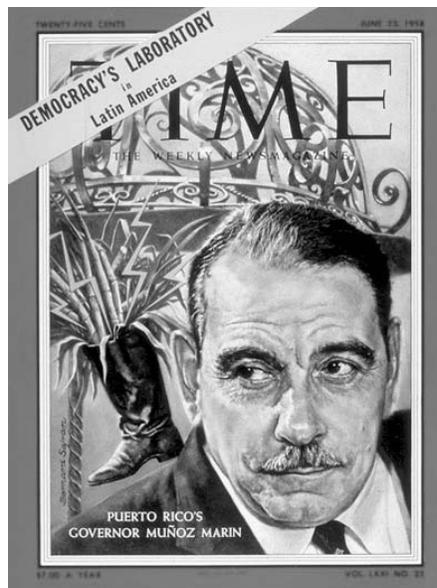
*– KCW*

# PUERTO RICO AND THE U.S. IN THE 1950s

## Immigration and the American Dream

In the 1950s the Puerto Rican Tourism Company hired an American advertising firm to publicize Puerto Rico's new trifecta-approach to self-promotion: friendly to American investors, romantic for vacationing American couples, and home to the world's best rum. The firm embarked on a nation-branding campaign that aspired to fulfill this new image: it ran ads for rum featuring white businessmen at leisure ("A Tropical Treat from Puerto Rico!"), and ads for tourism with drawings of silhouetted young women leaning against balconies ("Falling In Love Again — with Old San Juan!"). Simultaneously, political coverage extolled the semi-autonomous territory as "Democracy's Laboratory." Within the span of just a few years, the first major luxury hotel, Caribe Hilton, had an American star-studded opening and excited press ensued; gambling was legalized; Puerto Rico's first modern airport was completed; and jet-setters lost Havana as a popular vacation spot due to the Cuban revolution. By the time the ad campaign hit, Puerto Rico was poised to shoot to the top of Americans' list of favorite Caribbean destinations.

Politically, Puerto Rico, under the governorship of Muñoz Marín, was in the midst of what was proclaimed as an economic makeover led by an ambitious new industrialization initiative named Operación Manos a la Obra, or Operation Bootstrap. Operation Bootstrap was both heralded as a policy miracle that ushered in a golden age for Puerto Rican employment and living standards, and, as José Padín articulated, denounced as "a policy of self-perpetuating hyper-dependence on foreign capital" because the initiative was deeply reliant on U.S. investors. Governor Muñoz Marín's face graced the covers of *Life* and *Time* in what one historian described as a "showcase for

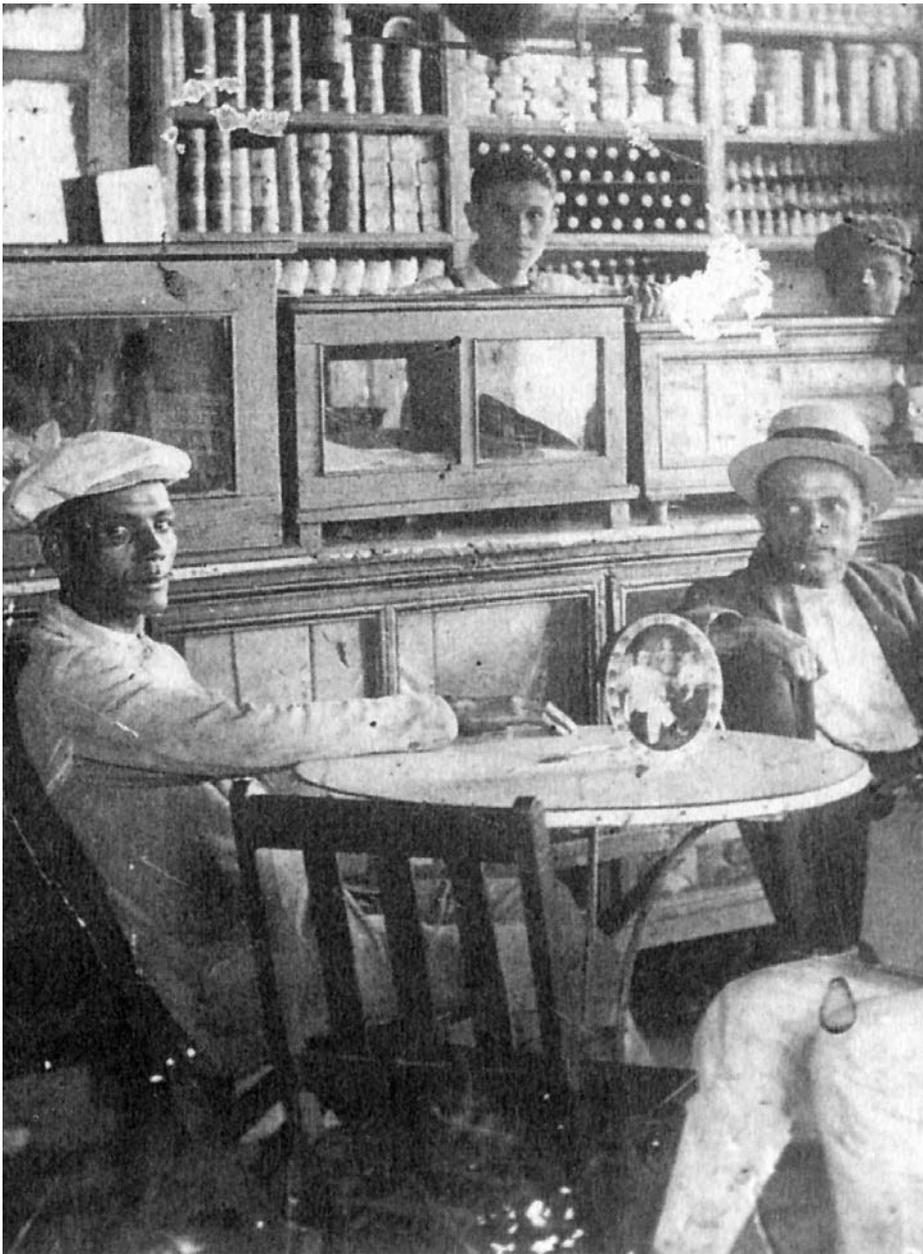


Time Magazine cover, June 23, 1958

the benefits of the American Way." While Puerto Rico peddled an image of itself in the United States as a great place to honeymoon, in truth, the commonwealth struggled with the difficult questions of nationhood versus statehood, and with issues of economic dependence and national identity, all in the midst of tumultuous political, industrial, and economic change.

The 1950s also brought the fracturing of the air travel monopoly, causing airfare from Puerto Rico to LaGuardia to plummet from \$180 to \$35 (in 1950 dollars); a massive wave of immigration to the U.S., and to New York in particular, began. The American Dream was as pervasive as it was pernicious, and it reached Puerto Rico with seductive promises of work and prosperity that it was

**While Puerto Rico peddled an image of itself in the United States as a great place to honeymoon, in truth, the commonwealth struggled with the difficult questions of nationhood versus statehood, and with issues of economic dependence and national identity, all in the midst of tumultuous political, industrial, and economic change.**



Country store, Puerto Rico; photo: Jack Delano

not prepared to deliver. As Petra, one of the characters in *Boleros for the Disenchanted*, says to her cousin Flora, “There’s a lot more money up there, and you know that’s true.” The iconic images of America under Presidents Truman and Eisenhower projected an American Dream of infinite economic possibility, complete with a white picket fence. America, post-World War II, was in the midst of its own cultural and economic reinventions, with its Levittown subdivisions and “I Love Lucy” on television, the American Dream was being bought and sold more passionately and enthusiastically than ever before, transcending national borders with its promises of a better life.

The American economy exploited Puerto Rican workers in factory jobs where they were paid consistently below the American workers’ average (Puerto Ricans living in the U.S. made 71% of the average U.S. income in 1959, and by 1974 it declined even further to 59%). In addition, the U.S. military was able to draft Puerto Ricans into the American Army despite the fact that Puerto Ricans could not (and still cannot) vote in the general American presidential elections — an injustice many considered a blood-tax without representation. Resentment was growing among many Puerto Ricans that their U.S. “liberators,” who freed them from Spanish oppression in 1898, were simply

engaging in a new kind of colonization. Don Fermin, Flora’s father in *Boleros for the Disenchanted*, says: “Look at this land. The richest on earth. Spit in the ground, a tree grows. Reach into any branch and feed yourself of the thickest, sweetest fruit. Now, we send our food up north for next-to-nothing... and it comes back to us in expensive tin cans. And every day the best and the brightest get on airplanes to starve and freeze in New York.”

In a particularly vicious irony, Puerto Rican immigrants to the U.S., despite their status as citizens, found themselves victims of a new surge of prejudice. From 1950-1960 almost half a million Puerto Ricans emigrated from the island — more than three times the number from the previous decade — only to be accused of overwhelming the public facilities, stealing jobs, spreading disease, and corrupting morals. Rumors even began to circulate that Puerto Ricans were negotiating with left-wing New York congressman Vito Marcantonio — swapping their votes for places on the relief roles.

Back on the island, U.S. immigrants returning home to Puerto Rico faced prejudices similar to those they had to navigate in the States. Many Puerto Ricans in the 1950s saw the United States as the embodiment of almost Manichaeian dualities: representing at once material opportunity and spiritual depravity. Puerto Ricans returning home sometimes found themselves associated not only with American capitalism but also with an American value system: a lifestyle stereotypically considered rife with iniquity, violence, drugs, promiscuity, and atheism.

The stereotypes flourished in both directions and many Americans’ impressions of Puerto Rico were shaped by sentimental images of an island marketed as implicitly romantic, juxtaposed with an intolerance for its denizens whom they often stigmatized as the harbingers of declining community and morality. Thus, the real story of this evolving nation and its people was largely eclipsed by both propaganda and prejudice. Many immigrants experienced, if not a direct shattering, then a slow erosion of the American Dream of thriving prosperity and opportunity that led them to immigrate in the first place. — KCW



BU Theatre by T. Charles Erickson

## Audience Etiquette

Because many students have not had the opportunity to view live theatre, we are including an audience etiquette section with each literary/curriculum guide. Teachers, please spend time on this subject since it will greatly enhance your students' experience at the theatre.

1. How does one respond to a live performance of a play, as opposed to when seeing a film at a local cinema? What is the best way to approach viewing a live performance of a play? What things should you look and listen for?
2. What is the audience's role during a live performance? How do you think audience behavior can affect an actor's performance?
3. What do you know about the theatrical rehearsal process? Have you ever participated in one as an actor, singer, director, or technical person?
4. How do costumes, set, lights, sound and props enhance a theatre production?



Spanish arches, Puerto Rico; photo: Linnell Esler

## BACKGROUND & Objectives

Use the following synopsis and objectives to inform your teaching of *Boleros for the Disenchanted* curriculum.

**F**aced with few opportunities and little hope for a good life, Flora makes the difficult decision to leave her parents in Puerto Rico and follow her husband to the United States. But the American dream proves more elusive than they anticipated. Was their tragic fate sealed by her father's angry curse? Or is their pain and suffering a harsh reality of immigrant life?

### OBJECTIVES

Students will:

1. Identify key issues in *Boleros for the Disenchanted* including:
  - Poverty in a Land of Plenty
  - Will vs. Destiny
  - Supernatural Beliefs
  - For Better, For Worse
  - Fidelity vs. Infidelity
2. Relate themes and issues in the play to their own lives.
3. Analyze the themes and issues within the historical and social context of the play.
4. Participate in hands-on activities that enhance understanding of the production.
5. Evaluate the Huntington Theatre Company's production of *Boleros for the Disenchanted*.

# PREPARATION FOR *Boleros for the Disenchanted*

*Note to Teachers: Use the following ideas to engage your class in thinking about Boleros for the Disenchanted and its major themes.*

## PUERTO RICO IN THE 1950S

The first act of the play is set in 1950s Puerto Rico, when the island was undergoing major economic, political and cultural upheaval. The United States had recently recognized the right of Puerto Ricans to elect their own governor and to draft their own constitution. At the same time, however, the United States was becoming more involved in managing Puerto Rico's economy, using a project called "Operation Bootstrap" to push the island from agriculture toward manufacturing. With the economy struggling, twenty percent of the island's population moved north to the United States in search of better opportunities. Today, more people of Puerto Rican descent live in the United States than on the island of Puerto Rico itself. Research

Puerto Rico in the 1940s, 50s, and the past 10 years. How has the passage of time shaped politics, economics, society, and religion on the island?

## JOSÉ RIVERA

José Rivera, who wrote *Boleros*, is one of America's most prolific and celebrated Hispanic playwrights. He was born in Santurce, Puerto Rico and lived there until he was four years old, when his family immigrated to the United States, ultimately settling in New York. The play, while not autobiographical, touches on issues and places close to his heart. Based on the events in the play, what do you think Rivera views as the positives and negatives of emigrating from Puerto Rico to the United States? Given his own success as a playwright, do you think he may feel differently about how such moves affected his parents and their contemporaries, as opposed to how they affected his own generation?



Day Without Immigrants Rally; photo: Steve White

## KEY ISSUES

### Poverty in a Land of Plenty

The characters of Flora and her husband Eusebio choose to leave Puerto Rico because they believe life will be better for their family in the United States. But Eusebio struggles to find decent employment at a fair wage, and their house is "small and poor by American standards." Even worse than their material poverty, though, is their social isolation. They are desperately homesick for their friends and family in Puerto Rico and for the island's unique cultural traditions. Flora worries that her children, having been raised in America, lack the emotional strength of people from her hometown. Do you think that she and her husband ultimately provided a better life for their family in the United States? Why or why not?

### Will vs. Destiny

Manuelo felt certain that tragedy would befall Flora. "Hubris," he says, "is always punished by the Gods." Eusebio, too, wonders if his life with Flora is destined to be unhappy, thanks to Don Fermin's angry curse on their wedding day. Yet much of their heartache and sadness results from personal choices. Twice, Eusebio betrays Flora with his infidelity. Excessive drinking leaves him in a state that Flora considers worse than death — for both of them. What is hubris? Consider a time in your own life when hubris was involved in a decision or choices you made. Then consider Eusebio and Flora's journey throughout the play. Were they destined for punishment from the beginning, or were their circumstances mostly the result of choices along the way?

### Supernatural Beliefs

Flora inherits from her parents both a religious faith and a set of mystical beliefs. Her family is just as likely to consult the local witch as to consult the local priest, resorting to curses and spells as well as prayer. Eusebio, in contrast, is generally skeptical of supernatural beliefs. Yet in the play's second act, it is Flora who has serious doubts when Eusebio claims to have been visited by an angel and warned of his imminent death. Both find themselves confused and shaken when Eusebio suffers a stroke instead of dying. Do

you think that a belief in the supernatural helped or hurt Flora and her family? How would her life have been different if she had been more skeptical?

### **For Better, For Worse**

Dona Milla speaks plainly to her engaged daughter about the difficulties of marriage and goes so far as to call it a “holocaust.” Her situation is indeed difficult. She is poor, has a missing son, and an abusive husband. Yet she keeps going because of the “drop of love” left in their relationship. Flora is much the same way. She still feels passion for Eusebio, even though he has been unfaithful and has allowed his body to break down. Do you agree with Eusebio that “it’s this or it’s nothing,” meaning that the success of a marriage depends on extreme sacrifice? When young couples visit Flora for pre-marriage counseling, what message should they take away from her situation?

### **Fidelity vs. Infidelity**

Upon hearing of her fiancé Manuelo’s affair, Flora is devastated. She takes emotional, romantic, and sexual loyalty very seriously, and views their engagement and upcoming marriage as “a commitment before God, Christ, and the Mother of God.” Though she intends to forgive Manuelo eventually, she plans to first make sure he hurts as she has, and only when he begs her to stop and realizes how lucky he is to have her will she bestow her forgiveness upon him. Manuelo, however, has other ideas. He is unrepentant, and quick to explain his infidelity as unavoidable and part of male nature.

When Flora meets and falls in love with Eusebio, she believes she has found a man who will be faithful to her for life. But after they have been married for many years, the elderly Flora discovers that Eusebio has been hiding something. In addition to a one-time tryst that she knew about and forgave him for, Eusebio confesses to Flora that he had a second affair. Given that Flora wanted to forgive Manuelo, and did forgive Eusebio the first time, why do you think she feels so conflicted when she finds out about Eusebio’s second betrayal? Was her expectation of fidelity misguided? Why or why not?



Monica Raymund and Elliot Villar in the Huntington Theatre Company’s production of *Boleros for the Disenchanted*. Photo: Eric Antoniou

# Arts Assessment

*The following exercises are interactive, hands-on challenges in Drama, Music, Design, and Visual Arts. They aim to give students a better understanding of the many tasks that contribute to a theatrical production.*

### **MUSIC/DANCE**

Boleros are love songs. Sometimes sad and sometimes joyous, they are always passionate. They are usually performed at a slow tempo and are sung with great feeling. For an example of this type of music, visit [www.npr.org](http://www.npr.org) and listen to *Volver, Volver* by Los Lobos from the segment “Boleros for your Lover.” A bolero is also a dance from the Spanish tradition for either a pair or a soloist to perform at a slow tempo. This will require some research, but you and a partner should find a bolero that you enjoy and choreograph a traditional dance for it. Share your creation with the class!

### **COSTUME DESIGN**

Imagine that you have been asked to design costumes for the play. Choose either Flora or Eusebio and create a costume plan for your character. For each scene, write down what your character is wearing. Make sure to note the playwright’s stage directions. You may draw the costumes or provide pictures from magazines or the internet as a visual aid for your plan. Remember that costuming provides visual cues to the audience about what is happening in the play. How does Flora’s

wardrobe change from Act One to Act Two? Her costumes should reflect her age. Eusebio is coming home from duty in one scene and bedridden the next. His circumstances should be reflected through the clothing he wears. After attending the Huntington Theatre Company’s production of *Boleros*, compare your costuming ideas with those of the production’s costume designer. How are they similar or different?

### **ACTING**

Ask students to form pairs in order to act out a short scene of their choosing from the play. They should use props and elements of costumes, if possible. Have them consider their placement on the stage, blocking (who moves where and when), gestures, vocal tone, music, and the intended emotional impact of the scene.

### **CHARACTERIZATION**

Have each student choose a character from the play to portray. As if preparing for the role in rehearsal, ask students to answer the following questions about their characters: (a) What is my objective in the play, and which obstacles stand in my way? (b) How, if at all, does my character transform during the course of the play? (c) Are there any contradictions inherent in my character? (d) What do other characters think of my character, and what does my character think of them?

# MASTERY

# Assessment

## ACT ONE

### SCENE ONE

1. Where is the play set, and in what time period?
2. Why is Flora upset? Who tells her this unhappy news?
3. What is Don Fermin's opinion of Flora's fiancé, Manuelo?
4. What is Don Fermin's excuse for hitting his wife and daughter?

### SCENE TWO

5. What happened to Dona Milla's son, Efrain?
6. What does Manuelo confess to Flora? What does she ask of him for the rest of their engagement?

### SCENE THREE

7. How do Flora's parents want to exact revenge on Manuelo?
8. Who is Flora going to visit, and where?

### SCENE FOUR

9. Where in the United States would Petra like to live? Why does she think life in Puerto Rico is unhappy?
10. Who do the girls meet while eating their ice cream? What is his profession?

### SCENE FIVE

11. Why did Eusebio miss his bus every night for two weeks?
12. Describe Eusebio's childhood?
13. Why does Eusebio want to meet Flora's parents?

### SCENE FIVE

14. Who makes a surprise visit to Flora and her parents before Eusebio arrives?
15. What has he come to tell Flora?
16. Who breaks up the fight between Don Fermin and Manuelo?
17. How does Eusebio gain the "right to stay" and be with Flora?

### SCENE SEVEN

18. What does the priest say about people who choose to leave Puerto Rico?
19. What important announcement does Eusebio make on his wedding day?
20. What is Don Fermin's reaction to this news?

## ACT TWO

### SCENE ONE

21. Where are Flora and Eusebio living at the beginning of Act Two?
22. Why is Eusebio bedridden?

23. What has Flora's church asked her to do?
24. How did Monica and Oskar meet? How long have they known each other?
25. Once inside Eusebio's room, what does Flora show to Monica and Oskar?
26. What was Eusebio's first job in the United States?
27. To how many children did Flora give birth?
28. Do Oskar and Monica still want to get married after their counseling session?

### SCENE TWO

29. Who does Eusebio believe contacted him? What was he told? How does Flora react to Eusebio's dream? Why?

### SCENE THREE

30. What ritual does Eusebio want performed at his bedside?
31. What does Eusebio confess that horrifies Flora?

### SCENE FOUR

32. Did Petra move to the United States?

### SCENE FIVE

33. Does Eusebio die as foretold? What happens to him?

### SCENE SIX

34. What is the name of Oskar and Monica's baby?
35. Where are Oskar and Monica going?
36. What has Eve given Flora?
37. How does Flora offer to end Eusebio's suffering? Does he accept her offer?

## Related Works and Resources

You might explore the following works as supplements to this guide:

*Marisol and Other Plays* by José Rivera (1997)

*The Motorcycle Diaries* (DVD) directed by Walter Salles, screenplay by José Rivera (2004)

*Memories of Puerto Rico* (DVD) directed by Carlos Maldonado (2007)

*The Near Northwest Side Story: Migration, Displacement, and Puerto Rican Families* by Gina Perez (2004)

*Puerto Rico in Pictures* by the Lerner Publishing Group (1987)

*The Puerto Ricans: A Documentary History* by Olga Jimenez De Wagenheim (2002)

*Sonia Flew* (Audio CD) by Melinda Lopez (2007)

*When I Was Puerto Rican* (Audio CD) by Esmeralda Santiago (1994)

# OPEN RESPONSE & WRITING Assignments



Photo: Daniel Käsmayr

## OPEN RESPONSE ASSESSMENT

*Instructions to the students: Please answer the following as thoroughly as possible in a well-planned and carefully written paragraph. Remember to use topic sentences and examples from the text.*

1. Is *Boleros for the Disenchanted* a good title for this play? Why or why not?
2. The actors who play Flora's parents also play the roles of the older Flora and Eusebio in Act II. Why do you think the playwright made that decision?
3. Do you think Don Fermin is a good man? Why or why not?
4. Consider the character Don Fermin's anger toward Americans (whom he disparagingly calls "gringos"). Why does he believe the United States hurt his island, rather than helped it?
5. Flora feels that Manuelo's cheating is a form of punishment. Her mother thinks it may be a test. Who is right?
6. Why is Monica more disturbed than Oskar upon seeing Eusebio's amputated legs?

7. Eve is a caring and supportive nurse, helping both Eusebio and Flora. Why is she so fond of them?
8. Playwright José Rivera uses foreshadowing throughout *Boleros*. What is foreshadowing? Give one example from the play.
9. What role do priests play in Flora's decision-making? Compare the priest in the first act to the priest in the second act.

## WRITING ASSIGNMENTS

1. Contrast Flora as a young woman with her adult character 38 years later. How has she changed? What makes them hard to believe?
2. Discuss the symbolic significance of flowers throughout the play. Use examples from both acts.
3. Why did Flora, an obedient and faithful child, decide to leave Puerto Rico against her parents' wishes? Discuss the influences of Efrain, Petra and Eusebio in your answer.

4. Imagine that Efrain has heard about Flora's hardships and wants to get in touch with her. Write a letter from Efrain to Flora. The letter should explain what has happened to him, where he is, and why he hasn't reached out to her until now.
5. Don Fermin has a very negative view of the United States. What is the "American Mafia" to which he refers?
6. As a young man, Eusebio remarks, "I don't really think God put us on this Earth to suffer all day long ... Is that a life worth living?" What would the older Eusebio think about this statement?
7. Select one of the following quotes and discuss it in essay form.

*"They pay a man to do nothing, so he does nothing."*

*"Pure truth, no matter how hard to face, can never be unclean, undignified, or trashy."*

*"If you can't imagine yourself doing this for someone else, if you can't get your hands dirty, if you can't stand the smell or the pity or the pain in the other person's face, if you'd rather be anywhere else, then you're not ready to be married."*

*"We accept God has put us in the perfect life – the one which will teach us the most, even if it's a hard and sad life."*

8. Flora takes her job as a marriage counselor very seriously. Is she good at it? How, if at all, does she help Monica and Oskar's relationship?
9. In Act One, Scene 2, Manuelo states "God made men and women differently, Flora." Read Manuelo's monologue in which this statement appears and write a response to it. Do you agree or disagree with his views on men and women?
10. Imagine you have been assigned to write a third act for *Boleros for the Disenchanted*. Create an outline for this third act, in which you continue the story of Flora and Eusebio's life journey. If you have time, write a full scene to be read by volunteers in front of the class.

# Lesson Plans

*Teachers' note: Choose activities that are appropriate for your classroom period. All assignments are suggestions. Only a teacher knows his or her class well enough to determine the level and depth to which any piece of literature may be examined.*

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**ONE-DAY LESSON PLAN** introduces students to the context and major themes of the production.

**DAY ONE** - Introducing the Play

**1.** Distribute **Mastery Assessment** (P. 14) for *Boleros for the Disenchanted* for students to read before the performance and to review again after attending it.

**Optional:** Distribute **Handout 1: Vocabulary** and ask students to complete. A vocabulary test could be administered after viewing the play.

**2.** Read the **Synopsis** (P. 3) of the play. Discuss other works students have studied with similar themes and issues.

**3.** If time allows, discuss further pages from the literary guide, narrating highlights for students.

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**FOUR-DAY LESSON PLAN** introduces students to the production and then, after viewing the performance, asks them to think more critically about what they have seen. Includes time for class discussion and individual assessment.

**DAY ONE** - Introducing the Play

Same as Day One above; completed before seeing the production.

## For Further Exploration

*Note to Teachers: The following ideas and questions can be used to further explore the text. They can be used as prompts for class discussion or additional writing assignments.*

1. Research Doctor Jack Kevorkian, also known as "Doctor Death," who became infamous for helping his terminally and chronically ill patients commit suicide. He ultimately lost his medical license and ended up in prison. Kevorkian is known for saying that patients have a right to die and that death "is not a crime." Do you agree? Should the right be limited to ill patients, or should unhappy people also be allowed to take their own lives? What about Eusebio and his wife?
2. Adult-onset diabetes has reached epidemic proportions in the United States and the rest of the industrialized world. Medical studies suggest that over 90% of these cases could have been prevented by proper diet and exercise. Research this metabolic disorder and answer the following: How is diabetes diag-

nosed? What is the usual course of treatment? Is the loss of limbs a common result? How can you best protect yourself from becoming a victim of this devastating disease?

3. Don Fermin comments that the "Spanish may have been barbarians, but they at least brought to this island the concept of honor." Research the settling of Puerto Rico. To which historical moment is Don Fermin referring? What made the Spanish both honorable and barbaric?
4. "Military brat" is a label often used to describe the children of soldiers, like Eusebio's children. A military brat may be forced to move many times during childhood, changing schools and making new friends whenever his or her parents are deployed to a new place. Visit [www.npr.org](http://www.npr.org) and listen to Military Families and the Life of 'Brats.' What does "home" mean to a child who moves from military base to military base? Contrast Flora's childhood with that of her grandchildren. Why might it be difficult for her to relate to her own kids and their families?

**DAY TWO** - The Production

Attend the performance at the Huntington Theatre Company.

**Homework:** Students should answer the **Mastery Assessment** (P. 14) questions.

**DAY THREE** - Follow-up Discussion

Discuss **Mastery Assessment** answers in class.

**DAY FOUR** - Test

**Individual Assessment:** Choose either several questions from the **Open Response** (P. 15) or one question from **Writing Assignments** (P. 15) for students to answer in one class period.

**Optional:** Students may choose one of the **For Further Exploration** (P. 16) or **Arts Assessment** (P. 13) tasks to complete for extra credit.

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**SEVEN-DAY LESSON PLAN** completely integrates *Boleos for the Disenchanted* into your schedule. Within seven school days, you can introduce the play, assign reading and vocabulary, and assess your students on both a group and individual level. Students will ideally view the play after completing **Mastery Assessment** questions.

**DAY ONE** - Introducing the play

Same as Day One above.

**Optional:** Distribute **Handout 1: Vocabulary** due on Day Three.

**Homework:** Read the Act One and answer corresponding **Mastery Assessment** (P. 14) questions.

**DAY TWO** - Act One

Discuss Act One and answers to **Mastery Assessment** questions.

**Homework:** Read Act Two and answer corresponding **Mastery Assessment** questions.

**DAY THREE** - Act Two

Discuss the end of the play and answers to **Mastery Assessment** questions.

**Optional:** Review **Handout 1: Vocabulary**.

**DAY FOUR** - Attend Performance

**Homework:** Ask students to look over **Handout 2: Historical Survey – The Commonwealth of Puerto Rico** and complete the Multiple Choice and True or False sections.

**Optional:** Students may choose to complete one of the **For Further Exploration** (P. 16) tasks for extra credit.

**DAY FIVE** - Group work

Complete **Handout 2: Historical Survey – The Commonwealth of Puerto Rico**. Take time for class discussion. Schedule library time if necessary.

**DAY SIX** - Review/Preparation

Students should answer the **Open Response** (P. 15) questions as preparation for their test the following day.

**DAY SEVEN** - Test

**Individual Assessment:** Choose two questions from the **Writing Assignments** (P. 15) for students to answer in one class period.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Handout 1  
**VOCABULARY**

**barracks** \_\_\_\_\_

**blasphemy** \_\_\_\_\_

**castrate** \_\_\_\_\_

**chaste** \_\_\_\_\_

**daft** \_\_\_\_\_

**despondent** \_\_\_\_\_

**dismantle** \_\_\_\_\_

**dismember** \_\_\_\_\_

**dynamo** \_\_\_\_\_

**eunuch** \_\_\_\_\_

**exorbitant** \_\_\_\_\_

**fatalism** \_\_\_\_\_

**fecund** \_\_\_\_\_

**fidelity** \_\_\_\_\_

**furtive** \_\_\_\_\_

**hubris** \_\_\_\_\_

**hypocrisy** \_\_\_\_\_

**immaculate** \_\_\_\_\_

**imminent** \_\_\_\_\_

**impotent** \_\_\_\_\_

**indiscretion** \_\_\_\_\_

**morbid** \_\_\_\_\_

**overture** \_\_\_\_\_

**perturbed** \_\_\_\_\_

**reciprocate** \_\_\_\_\_

**recur** \_\_\_\_\_

**repentant** \_\_\_\_\_

**sanctity** \_\_\_\_\_

**sobering** \_\_\_\_\_

**succumb** \_\_\_\_\_

**trove** \_\_\_\_\_

**unnerving** \_\_\_\_\_

**withering** \_\_\_\_\_

## Handout 2

**HISTORICAL SURVEY: THE COMMONWEALTH OF PUERTO RICO**

**To fully appreciate Rivera's play, or any other artistic work from an unfamiliar culture or place, it is helpful to put the piece into context. Begin this process by answering the following historical questions. Consult all available resources. The library is a great place to start!**

**Circle the best answer.**

1. Who were the first known inhabitants of Puerto Rico?
  - a. The Spaniards
  - b. The Ortoiroid people
  - c. The Cherokee tribe
  
2. Name the explorer(s) who landed on the island on November 19, 1493.
  - a. Juan Ponce de Leon
  - b. Lewis and Clark
  - c. Christopher Columbus
  
3. Who was Puerto Rico's first known governor and where was he from?
  - a. Juan Ponce de Leon, Spain
  - b. Captain John Smith, England
  - c. Napoleon Bonaparte, France
  
4. How and in what year did the United States gain control of Puerto Rico?
  - a. At the signing of the Geneva Convention in 1864
  - b. Spain relinquished control at the end of the Spanish-American War in 1898
  - c. President Truman offered U.S. protection in exchange for the island giving up its independence in 1948
  
5. Who are Griselio Torresola and Oscar Collazo?
  - a. Puerto Rican Nationalists who attempted to assassinate President Truman
  - b. The current president and vice president of Puerto Rico
  - c. The most famous dancing team in Puerto Rican history, specializing in boleros
  
6. What is "Operation Bootstrap"?
  - a. A military campaign waged against Cuba
  - b. A fundraising campaign to benefit Puerto Rican children
  - c. A US program intended to shift the island's labor force from agriculture to manufacturing

Continued, other side

**Decide whether each statement is True or False.**

- |  |   |   |
|--|---|---|
| 1. The official language of Puerto Rico is French.                         | T | F |
| 2. Puerto Rico has its own constitution.                                   | T | F |
| 3. Puerto Rico votes in the U.S. presidential primary.                     | T | F |
| 4. Puerto Rico is not a territory of the U.S.                              | T | F |
| 5. Residents of Puerto Rico do not pay Social Security taxes.              | T | F |
| 6. The dominant religion on the island is Judaism.                         | T | F |
| 7. Tourism is a key component of the island's economy.                     | T | F |
| 8. More people of Puerto Rican descent live in the US than in Puerto Rico. | T | F |

**GROUP WORK**

In groups of three or four, exchange answers for the above questions and check each individual's work. The group should then work through the following assignment.

Flora and her family are very critical of America's influence over Puerto Rico's government and economy. Highlight all lines of dialogue from the play that address this issue. Then pick one passage to evaluate more closely. Gather historical evidence to support or refute what it says. Return to the class discussion with two columns that can be written on the board for your classmates to see. The first column should contain the line of dialogue (or page number from the text). The second column should be an explanation of your historical findings.

After the class discussion, consider the following: Did the groups choose similar passages? And did they agree on the historical context of these lines of dialogue?

**INDIVIDUAL ESSAY**

For homework, answer the following question in paragraph form.

If you had to defend America's actions toward Puerto Rico in the 1950s, what would you say? What is the proper relationship between the United States and Puerto Rico today?

ANSWER KEY:  
Multiple Choice - 1.B, 2.C, 3.A, 4.B, 5.A, 6.C  
True or False - 1.F, 2.T, 3.T, 4.F, 5.F, 6.F, 7.T, 8.T

# CURRICULUM FRAMEWORKS TIES

The Huntington Theatre Company's Student Matinee Series provides an invaluable opportunity for teachers, students, and families looking to increase young people's understanding of and interest in dramatic literature and the performing arts. This section contains a list of the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks for Theatre and English Language Arts that are addressed fully, in part, or are supplemented by attending the Huntington's production of *Boleros for the Disenchanted* and utilizing this study guide as a pre- and post-show resource.

## THEATRE

### Acting

- 1.7 Create and sustain a believable character throughout a scripted or improvised scene
- 1.10 Use vocal acting skills such as breath control, diction, projection, inflection, rhythm, and pace to develop characterizations that suggest artistic choices
- 1.11 Motivate character behavior by using recall of emotional experience as well as observation of the external world
- 1.12 Describe and analyze, in written and oral form, characters' wants, needs, objectives, and personality characteristics
- 1.13 In rehearsal and performance situations, perform as a productive and responsible member of an acting ensemble (i.e., demonstrate personal responsibility and commitment to a collaborative process)
- 1.15 Demonstrate an understanding of a dramatic work by creating a character analysis
- 1.17 Demonstrate an increased ability to work effectively alone and collaboratively with a partner or ensemble

### Technical Theatre

- 4.12 Conduct research to inform the design of sets, costumes, sound, and lighting for a dramatic production. *For example, students select a play from a particular historical period, genre, or style and conduct research using reference materials such as books, periodicals, museum collections, and the Internet to find appropriate examples of hairstyles, furnishings, decorative accessories, and clothing.*

### Critical Response

- 5.5 Continue to develop and refine audience behavior skills when attending informal and formal live performances
- 5.12 Attend live performances of extended length and complexity, demonstrating an understanding of the protocols of audience behavior appropriate to the style of the performance

## ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

### Grades 5-8

- 8.19 Identify and analyze sensory details and figurative language
- 8.20 Identify and analyze the author's use of dialogue and description
- 8.23 Use knowledge of genre characteristics to analyze a text
- 8.24 Interpret mood and tone, and give supporting evidence in a text
- 8.25 Interpret a character's traits, emotions, or motivation and give supporting evidence from a text
- 9.5 Relate a literary work to artifacts, artistic creations, or historical sites of the period of its setting
- 10.3 Identify and analyze the characteristics of various genres (*poetry, fiction, nonfiction, short story, dramatic literature*) as forms with distinct characteristics and purposes
- 17.3 Identify and analyze structural elements particular to dramatic literature (*scenes, acts, cast of characters, stage directions*) in the plays they read, view, write, and perform
- 17.5 Identify and analyze elements of setting, plot, and characterization in the plays that are read, viewed, written, and/or performed: setting (*place, historical period, time of day*); plot (*exposition, conflict, rising action, falling action*); and characterization (*character motivations, actions, thoughts, development*)

### Grades 9-10

- 9.6 Relate a literary work to primary source documents of its literary period or historical setting
- 11.5 Apply knowledge of the concept that the theme or meaning of a selection represents a view or comment on life, and provide support from the text for the identified themes
- 17.7 Identify and analyze how dramatic conventions support, interpret, and enhance dramatic text

### Grades 11-12

- 9.7 Relate a literary work to the seminal events of its time
- 11.6 Apply knowledge of the concept that a text can contain more than one theme
- 11.7 Analyze and compare texts that express a universal theme, and locate support in the text for the identified theme
- 17.9 Identify and analyze dramatic conventions (*monologue, soliloquy, chorus, aside, dramatic irony*)



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